

The Crucible, Act I by Arthur Miller
Reading Warm-up B

Read the following passage. Pay special attention to the underlined words. Then, read it again, and complete the activities. Use a separate sheet of paper for your written answers.

An important character in Act I of Arthur Miller's play is the slave Tituba, who was brought to Massachusetts from the Caribbean island of Barbados. The English first established a colony on Barbados in 1627. The colonists' early years there were marked by disorder, even anarchy, because of their troubles in obtaining supplies. Another problem was the frequent quarrels or squabbles between colonial leaders, who often disagreed about land claims. In addition, many of the leaders had narrow-minded, parochial views on what exact relationship should exist between the colony, the British Parliament, and the King.

Other problems in early Barbados stemmed from the search for a profitable export crop. In the 1640s, however, the colonists agreed on a drastic, thoroughgoing shift from tobacco to sugar. This decision had important consequences. Sugar needed a large labor force, so landowners turned openly and blatantly to the importation of African slaves. Small farms were combined into much larger plantations. This is a trend that must surely have rankled the less prosperous colonists. Large landowners, however, reaped huge profits, because sugar was in high demand in European markets. Such landowners settled comfortably into political power as a planter aristocracy, leading life with elegant propriety and enjoying the privileges of an elite class. Other colonists, as well as slaves, understood for the most part that criticism of the planter slaveholders would be interpreted as defamation, and would be severely punished as a slander on the island's leadership.

In 1834, slavery was abolished; the Barbados sugar trade, however, continued on. Even today, most farmland is planted with sugarcane, although the island's chief source of revenue is tourism. In 1966, Barbados won independence from Great Britain.

1. Underline the words in this sentence that hint at the meaning of anarchy. What are two antonyms for anarchy?
2. Circle the words that hint at the meaning of squabbles. Are squabbles usually about important issues, or about small ones?
3. Underline the word in this sentence that hints at the meaning of parochial. Use a word meaning the opposite of parochial in a sentence.
4. Underline the words in this sentence that hint at the meaning of drastic. What are two synonyms for drastic?
5. Circle the words in this sentence that hint at the meaning of blatantly. Use a word meaning the opposite of blatantly in a sentence of your own.
6. Circle the words in this and the previous sentence that give a good clue to the meaning of rankled. What is an antonym for rankled?
7. Underline the words in this sentence that hint at the meaning of propriety. What is a synonym for propriety?
8. Underline the words in this sentence that hint at the meaning of defamation. Use the word defamation in an original sentence.